

August 12, 1998

Bosnia II: The Clinton Administration Sets Course for NATO Intervention in Kosovo

Goals, Potential Costs, and Motives All Uncertain

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the Clinton Administration has set American policy on a course that is likely to lead to some sort of U.S.-led NATO military intervention in the troubled Serbian province of Kosovo within the next few months, perhaps within weeks. Recent events pointing in that direction include:

- **NATO's finalization and refinement of contingency plans for military operations in Kosovo.** These reportedly include estimates of the size of a possible peacekeeping force in Kosovo (possibly "50,000 troops or more" [*Agence France Presse*, 7/8/98]) as well as selection of potential bombing targets throughout Serbia. In addition, the Clinton Administration has announced continuing "refinements" in "a range of contingency plans" for NATO action so that a decision by political leaders to intervene could be made quickly [State Department press spokesman James P. Rubin, State Department Daily Press Briefing, 8/3/98].
- **The staging of NATO exercises near Kosovo as a warning to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to halt operations against the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an armed ethnic Albanian group seeking Kosovo independence.** In June 1998, NATO staged mock airstrikes in neighboring Albania and Macedonia ("Operation Determined Falcon"). During August 17-22, air and ground exercises are scheduled to take place in Albania and during September 10-18 in Macedonia.

As of this writing, planning for a U.S.-led NATO intervention in Kosovo is now largely in place, while the Clinton Administration's apparent willingness to intervene has ebbed and flowed on an almost weekly basis. The only missing element appears to be an event — with suitably vivid media coverage — that would make intervention politically salable, even imperative, in the same way that a dithering Administration finally decided on intervention in Bosnia in 1995 after a series of "Serb mortar attacks" took the lives of dozens of civilians — attacks, which, upon closer examination, may in fact have been the work of the Muslim regime in Sarajevo, the main beneficiary of the intervention. [For details, primarily reports from European media, see RPC's "Clinton-Approved Iranian Arms

Transfers Help Turn Bosnia into Militant Islamic Base," 1/16/97.] That the Administration is waiting for a similar "trigger" in Kosovo is increasingly obvious: "A senior U.S. Defense Department official who briefed reporters on July 15 noted that 'we're not anywhere near making a decision for any kind of armed intervention in Kosovo right now.' He listed only one thing that might trigger a policy change: 'I think if some levels of atrocities were reached that would be intolerable, that would probably be a trigger'" [*Washington Post*, 8/4/98]. The recent conflicting reports regarding a purported mass grave containing (depending on the report) hundreds of murdered Albanian civilians or dozens of KLA fighters killed in battle should be seen in this light.

Kosovo, Bosnia: Here We Go Again . . .

As examined in this paper, the Clinton Administration's drift toward armed intervention in Kosovo bears striking similarities to the *ad hoc* decision-making that led to the Bosnia intervention beginning in 1995 and which, on a broader scale, has become the hallmark of the Clinton foreign policy. These similarities include:

- The framing of a highly complex ethnic conflict, with historical roots and conflicting equities extending back hundreds of years, in grossly simplistic terms in order to justify intervention in a region few Americans know (or care) anything about (*NOTE: Details on Kosovo's geography and complex history, including a discussion of the politically charged implications of the variant spellings Kosovo and Kosova, are found in the attached Appendix*);
- An almost total lack of clarity and coherence as to the outcome the Administration's policy is designed to produce, as well as how that outcome serves the national interest of the United States; and
- As in Bosnia, an unacknowledged reliance by the Clinton Administration on the cooperation of the person publicly blamed for most of the violence: Slobodan Milosevic himself.

It is imperative that Congress compel the Clinton Administration honestly to address these flaws in its policy *before* U.S. forces are committed to Kosovo. Indeed, the fact that comparable questions were not answered with respect to the Bosnia deployment (and in most cases still have not been answered) is one reason the Bosnia operation has now become precisely what the Administration promised Congress and the American people it would not be: an ill-defined, open-ended nation-building project — with no end in sight.

This paper argues that in Kosovo, as in Bosnia, future NATO enforcement of a jerrybuilt "settlement" may be designed less to protect American interests than to suit the short-term political needs of the Clinton Administration. Again, as in Bosnia, the United States may soon find itself serving the purposes of the most unsavory elements on all sides of an ethnic conflict — in particular, Slobodan Milosevic — while, ordinary people in Kosovo, both Albanian and Serb,

suffer. Those who believe Milosevic is the problem, not the solution, should be aware that high-level delegations from the Serbian opposition will be in Washington in September in an attempt to undermine what they see as misplaced support by the Clinton Administration for the Yugoslav dictator.

NATO enforcement of a jerrybuilt "settlement" in Kosovo may be designed less to protect American interests than to suit the short-term political needs of the Clinton Administration. And, as in Bosnia, the United States may soon find itself serving the purposes of the most unsavory elements on all sides of an ethnic conflict.

Clinton Policy Based On Melodramatics

As was the case in Bosnia, the Clinton Administration's claimed justification for intervention in Kosovo is based on a melodramatic oversimplification of the crisis which obscures its complex origins and development. In this case, the stage is set as follows: in 1989 Serbian strongman Milosevic abolished Kosovo's autonomy and is now intent on eliminating Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority from the province by military force; accordingly, "the lesson of Bosnia" is that early use of limited U.S./NATO force against Serbia is the only thing that can avert a humanitarian tragedy, a wider war, and deeper U.S. involvement. The keynote for the Clinton policy was struck earlier this summer by the Administration's Balkan point man and U.N. Ambassador-designate Richard Holbrooke:

"Diplomacy will only work with Milosevic if it's backed up with force. . . . Milosevic should understand, and this is the core point, that this is not a replay of Bosnia, that NATO is poised and involved in a way it wasn't for four years in Bosnia. If he thinks this is empty theater today, he's making a big mistake. . . . The lesson of Bosnia was: to not get involved early is to get more deeply involved later. . . . In Kosovo today, several hundred have died, about 10,000 to 50,000 are now refugees. . . . If that keeps up, we'll have a serious, much more serious situation on our hands. The lesson of Bosnia is: Do it early, it'll be more expensive later and it'll be harder to put the fabric of society back together" [ABC "Nightline," 6/15/98].

But as in Bosnia, this formulation can be supported only if the problem is understood in crude stereotypes, with little or no reference to the historical complexity and conflicting equities involved. [For details on Kosovo's geography and history, and the long history of competing Serbian and Albanian claims, see the attached Appendix.] Also as in Bosnia, the Clinton policy is reinforced by (and may in part be a product of) nearly uniform supportive media coverage:

"It's so simple if you read the newspapers or watch TV: Kosovo's Albanians are suffering under brutal Serbian rule, so NATO must ride to the rescue to stop the fighting and protect human rights. Of course, it may not be so simple. And that's what worries some critics, including a few veteran journalists. They fear the media

and the State Department share a simple, black-and-white view of foreign conflict that drives U.S. involvement in Kosovo, Bosnia, Haiti, Somalia and the Persian Gulf. . . . To some, it seems to be a policy based on melodrama, with villains committing unspeakable crimes against innocent victims who need U.S. help ["How Media Shape Foreign Policy: Seeking Melodrama, They Often Distort The News," news analysis by Brian Mitchell, *Investor's Business Daily*, 7/7/98].

Got Trouble? Call 911-NATO

Finally, Ambassador Holbrooke's suggestion that American inaction now will lead to deeper involvement later presumes, with little explanation, that whatever happens in Kosovo is ultimately the responsibility of the United States and NATO. This should be seen as an application of the Clinton concept of the "new NATO," announced by the president at the May 1997 signing ceremony for the NATO-Russia Founding Act, under which the alliance would exist not just to defend its members but to "advance the security of every democracy in Europe — NATO's old members, new members, and non-members alike." [For further discussion of the Administration's "new NATO" doctrine, see RPC's Legislative Notice No. 55, Treaty Doc. 105-36 — Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, 3/18/98.] In any case, the Administration's message is clearly understood by the Albanian insurgents in Kosovo, who may expect to achieve their goals less because of their own prospects for military success than because of a hoped-for outside intervention: As one fighter put it, "We hope that NATO will intervene, like it did in Bosnia, to save us" ["Both Sides in the Kosovo Conflict Seem Determined to Ignore Reality," *New York Times*, 6/22/98].

In short, the history and motivation of the different sides in Kosovo is far more complex — and less one-sided — than Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's memorable statement that the United States is "not going to stand by and watch the Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with doing in Bosnia." Indeed, based on a longer view of Kosovo's history, other observers have come to the opposite conclusion: "They [i.e., the media] write with the spin that Kosovo is an Albanian land being taken over by the Serbs, when the reality is otherwise," comments Ron Hatchett, formerly a Balkan analyst for the Defense Department and currently director of the Center for International Studies, University of St. Thomas, Houston ["From Peacekeeper to Babysitter," *Investor's Business Daily*, 6/17/98]. Both Serbs and Albanians have ample historical grounds for claiming that Kosovo/Kosova belongs to them and that the other group is violently trying to take it away.

Whitewashing the KLA

But in order to make the case for U.S./NATO intervention, the Clinton Administration, as in Bosnia, must rely on the ethnic justification of one side in the conflict to the exclusion of the other side's case. Contributing to the success of this strategy to date has been the negligible attention given to the KLA's ties to organized crime elements in the Albanian diaspora [See: "Speculation plentiful, facts few about Kosovo separatist group," *Baltimore Sun*, 3/16/98; "Germany 'can take no more refugees'," *The Guardian* (London), 6/17/98; "My plan to save

Kosovo now," by Paddy Ashdown, *The Independent* (London), 8/5/98] and indications that the KLA may be receiving assistance (as did the Muslim regime in Bosnia) from Iran [See: "Radical groups 'arming Kosovo Albanians'," *Financial Times* (London), 5/8/98; "Italy Become's Iran's New Base for Terrorist Operations," *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* (London), February 1998].

In addition, there are media reports that the recent embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania may be connected to the deportation from Albania of several members of an Islamic terrorist cell connected to Saudi expatriate Osama Bin Laden; questions are now being raised as to the activities of radical Islamic groups in Albania, particularly in the region around the town of Tropoje, a known KLA staging area ["U.S. Blasts' Possible Mideast Ties: Alleged Terrorists Investigated in

"One of the most disturbing aspects of the present crisis is that it may have been triggered by our own inept foreign policy in Bosnia and Kosovo. There, beyond all common sense, we find ourselves championing Muslim factions who draw support from the very Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups who are our mortal enemies elsewhere." [Col. Harry G. Summers (USA-Ret.)]

Albania," *Washington Post*, 8/12/98]. This possible connection raises serious implications for the Clinton Administration's regional policy: "One of the most disturbing aspects of the present [terrorism] crisis is that it may have been triggered by our own inept foreign policy in Bosnia and Kosovo. There, beyond all common sense, we find ourselves championing Muslim factions who draw support from the very Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups who are our mortal enemies elsewhere" ["Bringing terrorists to justice," by Col. Harry G. Summers (USA-Ret.), Distinguished Fellow, U.S. Army War College, *Washington Times*, 8/12/98].

Contradictions in Clinton Policy in Kosovo

Kosovo Independence: "No" Means "Yes"

The growing cycle of violence between the Milosevic repression and militant Albanian separatism highlights a major flaw in the Clinton policy toward Kosovo: the Administration has yet to articulate a coherent explanation as to the intended outcome of its policy or how that outcome serves U.S. interests. Further, the stated policy is itself fraught with contradictions:

On the one hand, the Clinton Administration says it does not favor revision of the borders of the successor states of former Yugoslavia: thus, the ethnic Albanian goal of an independent Republic of Kosova is not an acceptable outcome. On the other hand, the Administration says it favors some form of "enhanced status" or "enhanced autonomy" for Kosovo "within Yugoslavia." (The inconsistency inherent in this formulation has gone largely unnoticed. Since the breakup of Titoist Yugoslavia in 1991, the United States pointedly has refused to recognize the federation of the two remaining republics — Serbia and Montenegro — by its claimed designation, the "Federal Republic of Yugoslavia." Instead, Clinton officials have referred not to Yugoslavia but to the

nonexistent state of "Serbia-Montenegro." For example: "The United States and the international community do not recognize Serbia-Montenegro as the successor state to the former Yugoslavia" [*Serbia-Montenegro Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997*, Department of State, 1/30/98].)

But now, the Clinton Administration's sudden rediscovery of "Yugoslavia" in the context of Kosovo points to the suggestion from many quarters that Kosovo could be detached from Serbia and elevated to the status of a federal republic along with Serbia and Montenegro. (Indeed, as detailed in the Appendix, this was precisely the goal of previous disturbances in Kosovo during the 1980s, during the last period of ethnic Albanian control of the province.) There can be little doubt that this solution would lead directly to the very change in borders that the Administration claims to have ruled out. For example: "A good interim solution would therefore be to establish Kosovo as an independent republic within rump Yugoslavia, with the same status as Montenegro and Serbia. . . . After five years, the question of independence could be reopened" ["Not Another Bosnia," *Washington Post*, 1/18/98, by Jane M.O. Sharp, director of the defense and security program at the Institute for Public Policy Research and a senior research fellow at the Centre for Defence Studies, Kings College London]. Thus, the Clinton Administration's insistence on "enhanced" status for Kosovo "within Yugoslavia" is little more than a sleight-of-hand translating into a revision of the borders of Serbia-Montenegro/Yugoslavia but not openly acknowledging it.

Next Stop: Greater Albania

Kosovo is one of a number of places in the world where an ethnic group that constitutes a minority within an established state (but who constitute a majority in part of it) is engaged in a violent effort to achieve national independence, resulting in large-scale civilian suffering and human rights violations by the recognized government: Armenians in Azerbaijan, Christians in southern Sudan, Kurds in Turkey and Iraq, Tamils in Sri Lanka, Kashmiri Muslims in India, Karens in Burma, Tibetans and Uighurs in China, Chechens in Russia, Abkhazis in Georgia, etc. However, few of these would be considered suitable venues for outside intervention based solely on human suffering. The case for a U.S.-led NATO intervention in Kosovo would not be based on just the perceived need to protect Kosovo's Albanians but to prevent the war from spreading to neighboring countries:

"Certainly armed force should never be used or threatened lightly. In Kosovo's case, the humanitarian rationale is compelling, but not sufficient; people are suffering in many conflicts — from Eritrea to Sri Lanka — and America can't save them all. What makes Kosovo different is the likelihood that the fighting, if unchecked, will escalate, threatening the fragile peace in Bosnia and potentially sucking in even Greece, Bulgaria or Turkey. Then Mr. Clinton and his military would have no choice, and their task would be far more daunting" ["Outrage in Kosovo," *Washington Post*, editorial, 6/9/98].

A number of scenarios for the Kosovo conflict's potential spread to neighboring states has been suggested. These include:

A war between Serbia and Albania: In the process of pursuing KLA fighters or in their efforts to stop the flow of arms into Kosovo, Serbian forces cross into Albania, triggering a conflict with that country. As an example of this danger, last month Albania protested to Yugoslavia the landing of several artillery shells in Albanian territory [*New York Times*, 7/19/98]. While Albania is not a NATO member, it does cooperate closely with U.S./NATO regional policy under the Partnership for Peace program. In addition, Albania has a close military relationship with Turkey, whose involvement in an Albania-Serbia war would heighten already serious tensions over Cyprus and the Aegean Sea with fellow NATO-member Greece.

The KLA wins: If the KLA, either with or without NATO intervention against Serbia, is successful in securing Kosovo's independence, that success might itself be likely to ignite insurrections in neighboring Montenegro and, particularly, in Macedonia. The KLA has made it clear that its goal is to liberate not only Kosovo but ethnic Albanian-populated areas in Montenegro and in Macedonia — where the KLA already has a military presence, and where several recent bombings are attributed to the KLA. It is for this reason that the Macedonian and Greek foreign ministers in June put aside the squabbles between their countries and issued a joint statement opposing NATO intervention in Kosovo: "Once the bitterest of neighbors, Greece and Macedonia have united in the fear that a successful campaign by the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army could spell disaster for the Balkans. NATO strikes could bolster the KLA's campaign. 'Kosovo is a province of Serbia. Any change of borders will mean all-out war' in the Balkans," [said Macedonian foreign minister Blagoj] Handzinski. 'We condemn both the activities of the so-called KLA and Serb forces in Kosovo.' [Greek foreign minister Theodoros] Pangalos added: 'It is not by chance that the countries of the region represent the voice of logic. We have the most to win if there is a peaceful solution and the most to lose if there is a war'" [*Associated Press*, 6/23/98].

The Serbs win: Conversely, if according to one option being considered by NATO, force is used to close Kosovo's borders, a cutoff of outside supply of arms, materiel, and volunteers to the KLA would shift the military balance decisively to the Serbian forces. In such a case, given its wider regional agenda, the KLA likely would shift its operations to a softer target, particularly Macedonia — and Albania itself. Landlocked and impoverished, Macedonia is already seriously divided between majority Macedonians (who, like Serbs and Bulgarians, are Orthodox Slavs) and an Albanian Muslim minority that constitutes about one-third of the country's population. In Albania, the KLA is already a significant factor in a near-civil war situation in the wake of last year's anarchy and the underlying tension between north and south (dominated, respectively, by two ethnic groups: Ghegs and Tosks). Given the standoff between the (mostly Tosk) socialist regime of Fatos Nano in Tirana and the Ghegs supporting former president (and KLA supporter) Sali Berisha, who fell from power last year in the wake of a collapsed financial pyramid scheme, further large-scale violence in Europe's poorest country is likely even without exacerbation by further spillover from Kosovo. As documented by the International Crisis Group (ICG): "Like the Kosovo Albanians, Berisha is a Gheg and comes from Tropoje on the Kosovo border. This part of the country is largely beyond Tirana's control and the [KLA] is

operating there increasingly openly. Given the current weakness of the Albanian Army and latent hostility between Ghegs and Tosks, there is a danger that the KLA will in time extend its theatre of operation to Albania proper." ["The View From Tirana: The Albanian Dimension of the Kosovo Crisis," ICG Balkans Report No. 36, 10 July 1998]

A "Dayton-type" partition of Kosovo: Among the most likely immediate grounds for intervention is the need to ensure relief for numerous Albanian refugees (now generally numbered in excess of 200,000) fleeing the Milosevic security forces during the current fighting. (In accordance with the standard depiction, the media and the Clinton Administration pay little attention to the existence of Serb, Roma (Gypsy), Albanian and other refugees, also numbering in the tens of thousands, fleeing the KLA.) In fact, Milosevic's policy seems designed in part to *not* secure the defense of exposed Serbian villages, much less to protect from reprisal moderate Albanians who do not support the KLA. This raises the possibility of a tacit understanding between Milosevic and the KLA — and the Clinton Administration — for a carbon-copy of the scenario that led to the 1995 Dayton agreement in Bosnia: to allow a short-term intensification of the conflict, mutual "ethnic cleansing" by the KLA and Milosevic's forces, and, finally (after the needed "trigger" occurs), a NATO-enforced ceasefire. At that point, the resulting Albanian-held territory receives "enhanced autonomy" leading in a few years to independence, while parts of Kosovo, notably the province's valuable mineral assets, stay in Serbia [See "Below It All in Kosovo, A War's Glittering Prize," *New York Times*, 7/8/98]. But for the short term this scenario allows (1) Milosevic to stay in power (and to appear, once again, to the more gullible elements of domestic opinion as the champion of Serbian national interests beset by a hostile United States) and (2) to allow the Clinton Administration to claim credit for another successful "peacemaking" operation like Dayton (never mind that, like Dayton, the "solution" has no long-term viability, and that the end result is another endless "nationbuilding" commitment for the United States.)

In short, the Clinton Administration is drifting toward Kosovo intervention as it did in Bosnia, with a great deal of planning with our NATO allies on the mechanics of the operation but little attention to how the operation serves U.S. interests. Indeed, there is no assurance that intervention will prevent the one danger that might justify U.S.-led action — the war's spreading to other parts of a highly volatile region. In fact (especially under the second and third scenarios described above), intervention might itself serve as a catalyst for a wider war. In particular, as in Bosnia, future NATO enforcement of a jerrybuilt Kosovo "settlement" may be designed less to protect American interests than to suit the short-term political needs of the Clinton Administration. Again, as in Bosnia, the United States may soon find itself serving the purposes of the most unsavory elements on all sides of an ethnic conflict, while ordinary people in Kosovo, both Albanian and

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Serb, suffer. Indeed, in both Bosnia and Kosovo, one of the most unsavory elements is in fact the same person: Slobodan Milosevic.

Milosevic: the Clinton Administration's Silent Partner

In the course of what some have called the Third Balkan War — which began in 1991 with the secession of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia, continued with the secession of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, and now threatens to resume in Kosovo — the major media have never hesitated to lay virtually the entire blame for the violence on now-Yugoslav (formerly Serbian) President Slobodan Milosevic and, through him, the Serbs as a people. Since taking office in 1993, the Clinton Administration has maintained the same line. While Milosevic's contribution to the outbreak of the war and the brutality with which it was waged cannot be minimized, it is more than ironic that in every Clinton Administration initiative in the region, the key figure upon whose word the United States relies is none other than — the same Slobodan Milosevic. This phenomenon has become so familiar to observers of the region that it has even acquired a name: Milosevic the arsonist, Milosevic the fireman. The fact is, that in the unfolding Kosovo crisis Milosevic's retention of power in Belgrade fits the political needs of both the Kosovo Albanians and of the Clinton Administration.

Milosevic and the Kosovo Albanians

The Kosovo Albanians find Milosevic an indispensable prop for making their case for separation from Serbia. If Milosevic were replaced with a democratic regime, the Albanians would find it harder to justify their total rejection of any negotiated settlement short of independence. This is one reason why the Albanian leadership, despite professing peaceful and democratic aims, has refused to cooperate with the democratic opposition in Serbia and even, because of their boycott of Serbian elections, facilitates Milosevic's fraudulent appropriation of Kosovo's votes, without which he would not now be in power. With his level of electoral support in Serbia rapidly sliding towards 20 percent, and with his recent loss of control of Serbia's sister republic Montenegro, there is little question that Milosevic is vulnerable.

For Milosevic, having an Albanian minority within Serbia that is interested only in detaching a part of it is an invaluable political asset in posturing as a "nationalist" for his declining constituency. The disappearance of a visible secessionist threat would be politically devastating for him. Thus, despite the brutal measures his security forces have often used in Kosovo against innocent Albanian civilians, he allows the Rugova administration to function openly in Kosovo (their website in Pristina, Kosovo's capital, is www.republic-kosova.org/), a pro-Albanian Kosova Information Center distributes information hostile to the Belgrade regime, and several pro-secession Albanian-language media stay in operation, for example the militantly anti-Serbian daily *Koha Ditore* ("Daily Times," found at www.kohaditore.com/ARTA/index.htm); moreover, Milosevic has declined to cut off utilities (including electric power and telephone) to Albanian settlements, which receive them free of charge. For what is basically a police state, these privileges — which are generally comparable to if not better than those available to the Serbian

opposition outside Kosovo — are remarkable. Conversely, Belgrade's efforts to protect Kosovo Serbs from militant Albanian violence are deliberately meager, many of them believe, precisely because a steady fare of reported murders, arson, and rapes inflames Kosovo Serbs against their Albanian neighbors. Finally, due to the regime of sanctions imposed on Serbia, Milosevic, as the distributor of scarcity, for years has relied heavily on Albanian organized crime operations based in Kosovo, which has long been a center of sanctions-busting. The fact that some of these same syndicates are no doubt funding the KLA has given Milosevic no reason to disrupt their mutually lucrative business interests.

In short, as he did with Croatia's Tadjman and Bosnia's Izetbegovic, Milosevic has created a political symbiosis with the Kosovo Albanians. For him, they are a ratification of his nationalist credentials, though he undoubtedly will sell out the Kosovo Serbs (as he did the Krajina and Bosnian Serbs) when it is in his political interest to do so.

For the Kosovo Albanians, the brutal Milosevic is the moral legitimization of their cause (as he was for Tadjman and Izetbegovic), no matter how violent and unscrupulous some of their own behavior.

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Milosevic and the Clinton Administration

Until very recently, the Clinton Administration has shown virtually no interest in assisting political forces in Serbia that could remove Milosevic from power. In particular, during the winter of 1996-97, when hundreds of thousands of Serbs took to the streets of Belgrade and other cities in student-led anti-Milosevic demonstrations reminiscent of those that forced the ouster of other Central and Eastern European communist regimes, the Administration struck an attitude of studied coolness toward the protests. Only in the last month, with a meeting between the Administration's envoy to the former Yugoslavia, Robert Gelbard, and representatives of the Serbian democratic opposition (pointedly including the Orthodox bishop of Kosovo, Artemije, who is the moral leader of the opposition effort) has there been any evidence of a shift. (For more details on the opposition's efforts to oust Milosevic and achieve a peaceful solution to Kosovo, see www.kosovo.com, the website of the Serbian Democratic Movement of Kosovo and Metohija.)

Still, however, the dominant strain in Clinton policy toward Kosovo (and former Yugoslavia generally) appears to be based, as it always has been, not on undermining Milosevic but on cutting a deal with him. The Administration's seeming obsession with Milosevic appears in large part to be the influence of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, architect of the Dayton agreement who is widely seen as having established his own special relationship with the

Yugoslav president. As one critic has put it (in a review of Ambassador Holbrooke's recent Bosnia memoir, *To End a War*):

"Holbrooke . . . largely fails to address another issue over which he has been criticized — his relationship with Serbian leader Milosevic. Holbrooke's first big achievement in Yugoslavia was to get Milosevic to represent the Bosnian Serbs in all peace talks. From that point until the final hours at Dayton, the Holbrooke-Milosevic connection was at the core of the peace negotiation process. On page 4 of his book, Holbrooke reports that Milosevic is 'smart' and 'charming.' It is a point he makes over and over again. . . . This is not just a question of style. Many U.S. officials believe there is little chance of peace in the Balkans as long as Milosevic remains in power, and they wonder whether Holbrooke and other negotiators have acted wisely in depending on the Serbian leader so much. Holbrooke needs to confront this criticism, and he has not" [Tom Gjelten, diplomatic correspondent for National Public Radio, *Washington Post*, 6/7/98].

To date, Ambassador Holbrooke has approached his shuttle mission to find a Kosovo solution the way he approached Bosnia: only Milosevic counts: "Mr. Milosevic is . . . likely to have taken heart by the removal from Kosovo policy of the American special envoy, Robert S. Gelbard, who advocated a tough line against the Yugoslav President. . . . Mr. Holbrooke is known to consider Mr. Milosevic, despite all his faults, as the necessary collaborator to ensure the success of the Bosnia settlement" — and, no doubt, a hoped-for settlement in Kosovo as well [*New York Times*, 8/6/98]. For example, while he has been willing to shoulder the formidable task of getting the fractious Kosovo Albanians to agree on a negotiating team, Ambassador Holbrooke has been unwilling to discuss the possibility of Serbian opposition, and particularly Kosovo Serb, representation in any talks on Kosovo's future. He has met the KLA representatives — after the KLA was publicly denounced by Gelbard as a terrorist organization [*New York Times*, 3/6/98] because of its reprisal killings of civilians — but he declined to agree to meeting requests by the Serbian opposition, including from Bishop Artemije.

With plans for two high-level delegations to travel to Washington in September, the Serbian opposition hopes to bring the Clinton Administration around to a simple proposition: a just and lasting peace in Kosovo, and in the rest of former Yugoslavia, cannot be based on a "deal" with the current Belgrade regime. The kind of reception those delegations receive will be a bellwether as to the Administration's intentions. They especially deserve serious attention on Capitol Hill from those who believe Milosevic is the problem, not the solution.

"Dog" Days of August?

The foregoing review of the Clinton Administration's prevarications on Kosovo would not be complete without a brief look at one other possible factor in the deepening morass.

Consider the following fictional situation: A president embroiled in a sex scandal that threatens to bring down his administration. He sees the only way out in distracting the nation and

the world with a foreign military adventure. So, he orders his spin-doctors and media wizards to get to work. They survey the options, push a few buttons, and decide upon a suitable locale: Albania.

The foregoing, the premise of the recent film *Wag the Dog*, might once have seemed farfetched. Yet it can hardly escape comment that on the *very day*, August 17, that President Bill Clinton is scheduled to testify before a federal grand jury to explain his possibly criminal behavior, Commander-in-Chief Bill Clinton has ordered U.S. Marines and air crews to commence several days of ground and air exercises in, yes, Albania as a warning of possible NATO intervention in next-door Kosovo. Perhaps life does imitate art, and here the coincidence tends toward the surreal. Certainly there is one clear difference between the movie and the Kosovo crisis, in that the former was a media fraud with simulated violence while there is indeed a real shooting war in Kosovo (though not without some degree of media slant that would do justice to Stanley Motss, the fictional Hollywood producer played by Dustin Hoffman).

Not too many years ago, it would not have entered the mind of even the worst of cynics to speculate whether any American president, whatever his political difficulties, would even *consider* sending U.S. military

personnel into harm's way to serve his own, personal needs. But in an era when pundits openly weigh the question of whether President Clinton will (or should) tell the truth under oath not because he has

a simple obligation to do so but because of the possible impact on his political "viability" — is it self-evident that military decisions are not affected by similar considerations? Under the circumstances, it is fair to ask to what extent the Clinton Administration has forfeited the benefit of the doubt as to the motives behind its actions.

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RPC staff contact: Jim Jatras 224-2946

Appendix

Kosovo: Relevant Geography and History

The following is a supplement to RPC's "Bosnia II: The Clinton Administration Sets Course for NATO Intervention in Kosovo," 8/12/98. As noted, a major element in the Administration's drive to intervene is a grossly oversimplified understanding, fostered by slanted reporting, of the nature of the conflict. This Appendix is designed to give the interested reader a fuller sense of the complexity of the crisis and of its historical origins.

Kosovo/Kosova: What's in a Vowel?

Kosovo is a province in the southwestern part of the Republic of Serbia (See Map 1), in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Kosovo's provincial capital is Pristina. Kosovo's population of over 2 million reportedly consists of about 90 percent ethnic Albanians (of whom about 90 percent are Muslim, the rest mostly Roman Catholics) and about 10 percent Serbs (who are Orthodox Christians). However, even Kosovo's demographic statistics have become politicized: Albanians and their supporters claim Kosovo's Albanian population is well over 90 percent, while Kosovo's Serbs claim that it may be as low as 80 percent. One of the difficulties in establishing accurate proportions has been strong Albanian pressure on Kosovo's smaller Muslim groups — Turks, Islamized Serbs (i.e., similar to Bosnian Muslims), and Roma (Gypsies) — to identify themselves as Albanians. Kosovo borders on Albania; in addition, adjacent areas of

Montenegro (which, with Serbia, is the other republic remaining in the Yugoslav federation) and Macedonia (which peacefully withdrew from Yugoslavia in 1992) also contain large ethnic Albanian populations.

Map 1



Serbia and Montenegro

The term "Kosovo" is Serbian and is in general international use, including in most U.S. government documents. The Albanian spelling, "Kosova," is preferred by proponents of the Albanian cause and has appeared in Congressional documents; it has also been used on occasion by some Clinton officials, notably by White House national security adviser Samuel R. "Sandy" Berger. Kosovo Albanians refer to themselves as Kosovars. (Even the dictionary is subject to political

revision. The current WordPerfect 7 spell check on this document insists on the Albanian "Kosova," while the earlier WordPerfect 5.1 insisted on the Serbian "Kosovo"; WordPerfect 6.1 recognized neither spelling.) In Serbian, the province's full designation is "Kosovo and Metohija," also used in a contracted form, "Kosmet." The communist regime of Josip Broz Tito had formally dropped "Metohija," which refers to lands set aside for church use, from the official provincial title but it has now been restored.

A Tangle of Competing Claims

At sharp variance with the black-hat/white-hat media stereotype favored by the Clinton Administration, the history of Kosovo, with its competing claims of Albanians and Serbs, is at least as tangled as that of Bosnia, and both groups are passionately attached to their irreconcilable versions of rights and wrongs. It is known that both Albanians and Serbs have long been present in Kosovo. There is reason to believe that Serbs were once the large majority: place names are almost exclusively Serbian ("Kosovo" is derived from the Serbian word *kos*, meaning "blackbird") and virtually all pre-Ottoman historic monuments — churches and monasteries — are Orthodox Christian. Kosovo, known as the principality of Raska (or Ras)

prior to the Turkish conquest, was once the heart of medieval Serbia (See Map 2) and site of the Serbs' legendary defeat by the invading Ottoman Turks in 1389, at Kosovo Polje ("Field of Blackbirds") near the provincial capital, Pristina. (Post-conquest Turkish records also suggest a mostly Serbian population, but they generally refer to religion, not ethnicity. The Albanians were once a Christian people who fought on the Serbian side against the Turks at Kosovo Polje but who converted *en masse* to Islam in the late 15th/early 16th centuries.) Serbian numbers were reduced under the Ottoman Empire in which Muslim Albanians formed part of the local ruling class in four *vilayets* (provinces) encompassing all of today's Albania and large parts of Serbia (including all of Kosovo), Montenegro, Macedonia, and Greece

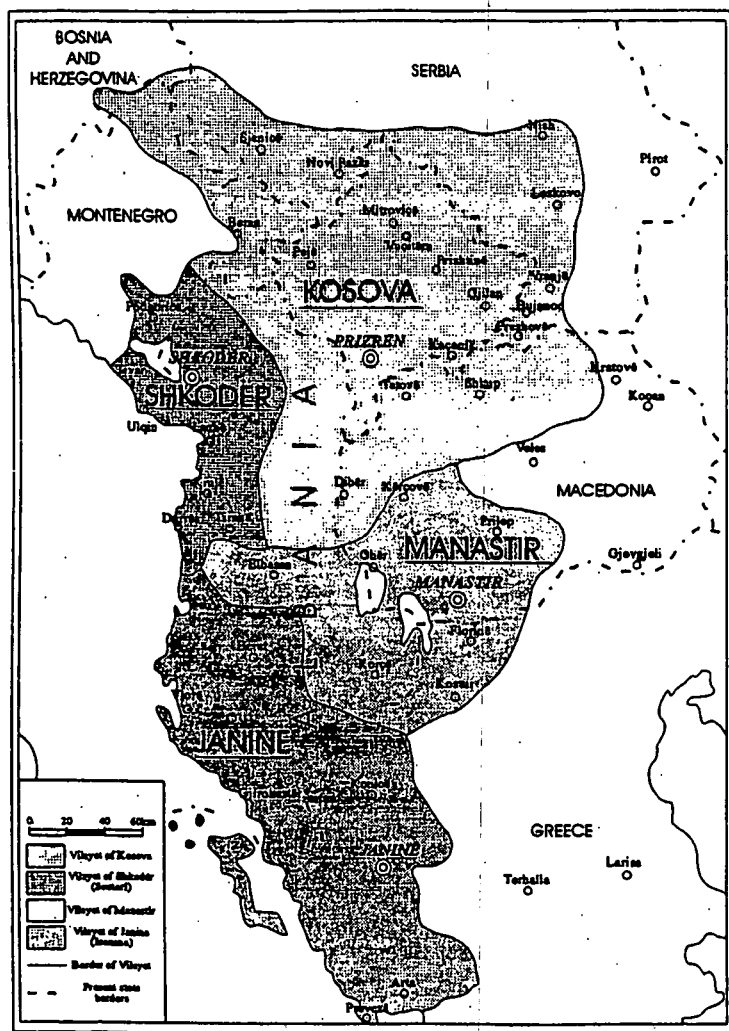
Map 2



(See Map 3); the Christian majority in these provinces, whether Albanian, Slav, or Greek, lived in near-serfdom.

Map 3

FOUR ALBANIAN VILAYETS DURING THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (until 1878)

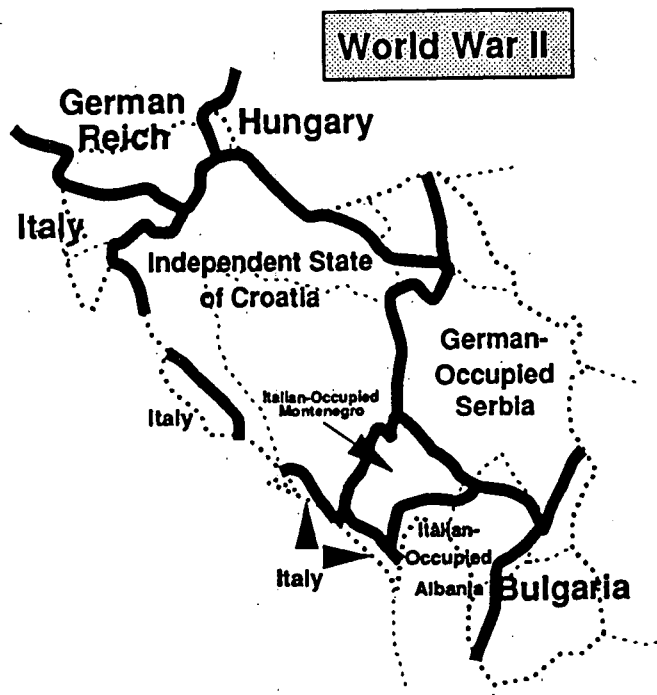


A major population shift occurred in the late 17th century after an abortive Christian revolt against Turkish rule, which resulted in tens of thousands of Christians, mainly Serbs, fleeing Kosovo to the then-Austrian Empire (mainly to the region known as Krajina in today's Croatia, from which the Serbs, with Clinton Administration assistance, were eradicated by a Croatian offensive in 1995), while large numbers of Albanian Muslims migrated in. As the Ottoman Turkish state declined in the 18th and 19th centuries, Kosovo became a focus of competing Serbian and Albanian independence movements. For example, in 1878, the year Serbia became an independent state, the Prizren League, which sought to create an independent Albanian state, was founded in Kosovo. In 1912, the year an independent Albania came into being with Austrian and Italian support, Kosovo was annexed by Serbia, with the Kosovo Albanians' efforts to join Albania forcibly suppressed. At that time Kosovo's Serbs and Albanians were roughly equal in numbers (and today each side claims categorically to have been the majority at that time).

World War II, then Communism

The decisive population shift in favor of the Albanians occurred between 1941 and 1989. During World War II, Kosovo was joined to the Axis puppet state of Albania (See Map 4).

Map 4



During this time the Albanian *Balli Kombetar* (National Union) and the 21st *Waffen SS* Division "Skanderbeg" (named after Albania's 15th-century national hero) committing mass killings of Serbs, with many fleeing to other parts of Serbia. After the war, Tito's communist regime — which had aspirations to bring under its rule all of the south Balkans, including Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece — forbade these refugees to return to Kosovo (which was established as an "autonomous province" within the Serbian federal republic in the communist federal system patterned after that of the Soviet Union) but permitted additional Albanians to enter from Albania, further marginalizing the remaining Serbs. Throughout the 1960s, Kosovo's growing Albanian majority, augmented by one of the highest birth rates in Europe, agitated for greater self-government, culminating in the 1974 constitution, which elevated Kosovo to virtual equality with a federal republic, including veto power even over republic

legislation having nothing to do with Kosovo. During autonomy as it existed after 1974, despite Kosovo's nominal status as part of Serbia, Albanians exercised complete control over the provincial administration; additional Serbs left during this period in the face of the provincial authorities' pervasive discrimination against Serbs in employment and housing and their refusal to protect Serbs from violence by Albanian gangs. During the 1980s, the ethnic balance shifted from about 75 percent Albanian and 25 percent Serbian to the Albanians' claimed current ratio of roughly 9-to-1. (Again, this ratio is subject to dispute, given factors such as out-migration of both Albanians and Serbs and the Albanians' refusal to participate in Serbia's 1991 census.) At the same time, Albanian demands mounted that the province be detached from Serbia and given republic status within the Yugoslav federation; republic status, if granted, would, in theory, have allowed Kosovo the legal right to declare its independence from Yugoslavia.

Milosevic Moves In

One of the ironies of the present Kosovo crisis is that Milosevic began his rise to power in Serbia in large part because of the oppressive character of pre-1989 Albanian rule in Kosovo. In 1987, he appeared at a rally in Kosovo where local Serbs (who were demonstrating against the

failure of the central government in Belgrade to defend them from the Albanian provincial authorities) were being beaten by Albanian provincial police. Milosevic — the first communist leader from Belgrade to ever publicly show any concern over the plight of Serbs under Albanian rule in Kosovo — told the cheering Serbs: "Nobody will beat you again." In the atmosphere of the unraveling of Titoist Yugoslavia which began with the dictator's death in 1980, nationalism was replacing communism as the effective ideology; by appealing to nationalism while most other Serb politicians remained committed to a multinational, socialist Yugoslavia, Milosevic was able to take advantage of the same political winds that brought to power the former communists Franjo Tudjman in Croatia, Milan Kucan in Slovenia, and Kiro Gligorov in Macedonia and the Islamic fundamentalist Alija Izetbegovic in Bosnia.

After solidifying his power as president of Serbia, in 1989 Milosevic pushed through changes in the Serbian constitution downgrading Kosovo's post-1974 autonomy status (as well as that of Serbia's other autonomous province, Vojvodina) to what it had been before 1974; thus, the frequent mention in the media that Milosevic "abolished" Kosovo's autonomy is inaccurate. However, in reaction to the downgrade, the Albanians declared a boycott of Serbian institutions and created their own schools and health care system. In 1990, they proclaimed their own independent Republic of Kosova and in 1991 elected poet Ibrahim Rugova its president. Because they regard themselves as citizens of independent Republic of Kosova, the Albanians also have boycotted Serbian elections, which, according to both the Serbian democratic opposition and the 1997 State Department Human Rights Report, is one reason Milosevic is still in power. During the 1990s, the Milosevic regime has resorted to increasingly harsh police measures: whereas in 1987 Albanian police were beating Serbian demonstrators, by the 1990's Serbian police were beating Albanian demonstrators. Meanwhile Albanian militants — which Dr. Rugova claims he does not control but whose activities he has not condemned — have resorted to increased violence directed against not only Serbian police and officials but Serbian civilians and insufficiently militant Albanians (largely among the minority Roman Catholics). The launching of a major attacks by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in February 1998 was undoubtedly, and accurately, calculated to trigger a massive and largely indiscriminate response by Milosevic forces. This growing cycle of violence has, in turn, further radicalized Kosovo's Albanians and has led to the possibility of U.S. military involvement.